



New Jersey Council of Education

THE COUNCIL EMERGES: PLACES AND MEETINGS

Since its inception in 1887, the Council of Education has continued to meet on a regular basis twice a year. And, New Jersey, in its educational progress, has profited greatly therefrom.

At present it meets, by Constitutional mandate, twice every year - in October and in March. For many years meetings were held in the Far Hills Inn, near Somerville. The meeting place because of a change in the ownership of the Far Hills Inn, in 1973 was changed to the Somerville Inn on Route 22, still somewhat centralized for members. The Council currently holds its meetings at the Bridgewater Manor in Bridgewater.

Not always has the Council had an unchanging meeting place, nor even an undeviating time schedule. This is not surprising when one considers the changes, which have occurred in travel accommodations during the Council's long existence.

Meetings were usually very lengthy during the early years of the Council's existence. In 1888, it was agreed that the twice-a-year meetings would begin on a Friday at 8:00 p.m. and reconvene on Saturday morning, with adjournment at noon. In 1895, to reinvigorate lapsing interest, definite meeting dates were set, the second Friday in November and the second Friday in April, with agendas extending from Friday afternoon through an evening session and into Saturday morning.

In 1913, the Constitution was changed to authorize meetings extending from Friday morning to Friday evening, plus a Saturday morning session. The dates were changed to the fourth Friday in October and the second Friday in March. On each occasion regular sessions were held at 10:30 a.m., 2:00 p.m., and 7:30 p.m. on Fridays and at 8:30 a.m. on Saturdays.

The present practice of twice-a-year, Friday meetings, limited to morning, was inaugurated in March 1930 - the result of improved roads, railways, and automobile transportation.

For many years the meetings were held in different locations, usually along the Jersey City-Trenton axis, a zoned area, which seemed to offer the greatest accessibility to the largest number of members. Only eight meetings were held south of this axis: six times in Asbury Park, once in Bordentown, and once in Glassboro State Teachers College.

For a while, just before and after World War II, the custom was established to hold meetings and luncheons in new, progressive junior and senior high schools, with tours of the buildings. Within this period State Normal Schools and State Teachers Colleges acted as hosts several times, as did Rutgers College (later Rutgers, the State University) and Princeton University (once).

Newark, probably because it was the hub of public transportation networks, was most frequently the host, eighty-nine times in all, with meetings held in eleven different locations within the city. Trenton, with nineteen meetings held in its secondary schools and at Trenton Normal School (now The College of New Jersey) was second in frequency of meetings. Jersey City, with ten meetings, ranked third-until the Far Hills Inn entered the picture in 1958.

The official service of a Council secretary is comparatively short today - especially when one remembers that for a fifty-eight year period, from 1893-1951, only three men served in that capacity. J. Howard Hulsart held the office for a record twenty-three years; Stephen V. Arrowsmith for fourteen years; and Paul H. Axtell, who at every meeting called the roll from memory (the roll call was one of the most exciting and interest-providing agenda items during this period), held office for eleven years.

Because of the lengthy and dedicated service, especially of the early secretaries, the minutes covering the Council's entire history provide an unusually complete history of the Council's existence. At first, kept in a bound notebook, they were handwritten in old-fashioned script with old-fashioned legibility. Typed minutes did not come into vogue until 1929. On one occasion a verbatim stenographic report of the entire meeting was made (March 12, 1937).

Beginning in March 1929, secretaries began the practice of binding into the minutes typed or mimeographed copies of addresses made and reports given. These, together with printed documents proposed under the order of the Council, reveal the "thinking" and the concerns of educators, in different period of time, and tell much regarding the issues and problems of the day. They also make clear the benefits which have accrued to present generations because of the sacrifices, efforts, and purposeful activities of our predecessors, whose distinguished achievements are reflect in the present reputation and prestige of the New Jersey Council of Education.

By order of the Executive Committee, when the 1962 History was prepared and all extant records and documents pertaining to the Council were permanently placed in the archives of Savitz Library, Glassboro State College. All future records were ordered added to that collection in order to keep intact the materials for "a continuing biography of the life and times of the New Jersey Council of Education." The archives are currently housed in the New Jersey Interscholastic Athletic Association's offices in Robbinsville, New Jersey.